

Laughter and Smiles at Happy Living Camp



There were happy faces galore at Rameshwaram on May 28 and 29. After all they were attending the Happy Living Family camp! The camp was conducted by Swami Ishwarananda and based on four humorous video sessions of Guruji

Swami Tejomayananda - "Take Charge!", "Perform to Potential," "Workable Tips" and "Harmony in Human Relationships."

Each of these videos were followed by a presentation by Swamiji where he further explained what was heard. The ref-

erence text for the whole camp was Guruji's book, 'Jivan Sutani.' After this the topic under discussion was further reviewed through a workshop. Prior to the commencement of the camp, Swamiji spent a number of hours over a period of several weeks, training students of Vedanta as group leaders, and it was they who coordinated the workshops where worksheets and ideas were shared.

75 adults and a dozen youth participated whole heartedly in the camp and the corridors of Rameshwaram filled with their enthusiasm and infectious laughter. Younger children of the families attending too enjoyed their time at the camp and engaged with BV teachers in discussion, arts and crafts.

A unique 'laugh time' was introduced on the second day, where it began with one minute of laughter. While most began to do so consciously, it soon produced spontaneous laugh aloud moments. This was followed by groups of attendees narrating a joke for the entire camp.

Each day concluded with a question and answer session with Swamiji.

Family Day, a Joyous Celebration at Rameshwaram



Family Day at Chinmaya Rameshwaram this year was extra-special as it celebrated Mother's Day and marked two important occasions: it was the birthday of Puja Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda and it also marked the birth anniversary of Adi Shankaracharya, the master who revived Hinduism in India.

All Balvihar grades, from every center, made theatrical presentations rooted in specific verses from Sankara's 'Bhaja Govindam.' Children sang, danced and acted out the immortal lines from the text making it educational as well as colorful with props and costumes. The 11th and 12th grade students made video presentations which were humorous even while staying on message. In an indication of the growing size of CMLA BV, the satellite centers made their presentations on May 7 and the Rameshwaram BVs followed the next day.

Swami Ishwarananda, on each day, spoke briefly and said that the aim of the program was to bring together everyone as a family. Treating "family" as an acronym, he said it stood for 'Father and Mother in Love with You!' He urged all to connect with each other, and in this tech age of "iPhone, iPad and I, I, I," learn to remain aware of our surroundings and grounded in the here and now.

Acharya Mahadevi was invited by him to speak on the details of the book of plays that was released on the occasion. At the event, children also received their prizes for the Geeta chanting competition.



Mothers Celebrated by Children

On May 8, BV children in the Valley and Redlands celebrated and honored their mothers with 'matru puja.' With love and laughter they applied kum kum and washed the feet of their mothers. Fathers hovered around, enjoying the attention given by the children to their parent. At Rameshwaram, fathers attended to kitchen duties, cooking an elaborate meal for mothers, which was enjoyed by all.



From the archives: Seen here a timeless picture of Swamiji receiving blessings from his mother.

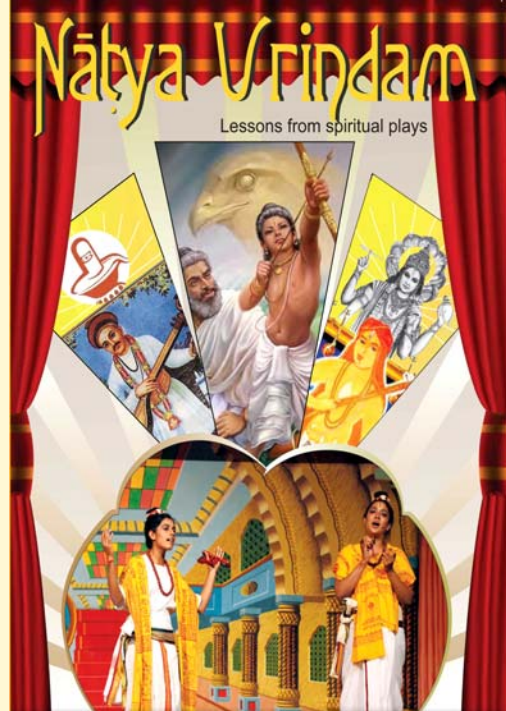
Book Releases



Two new books were released at CMLA by Swami Ishwarananda on May 8.

'He Did It' is a Chinmaya West publication and the first in a planned series of books by Mananam devoted to Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda leading up to His birth centenary year in 2012. The beautiful book contains essays, rare pictures and articles that are not to be missed. *Seen here Guriji with the book at Gurudev's Samadhi in Siddhabari. Available at CMLA bookstore.*

The second book, 'Natya Vrindam: Lessons From Spiritual Plays' is a book of plays compiled by Acharya Mahadevi. It has scripts that can be simply read for pleasure but more importantly, used by BV teachers for the staging of plays with their students. It has been produced and published by Chinmaya Mission Los Angeles. *Available at CMLA bookstore, \$10.*



CMLA Teachers Gather For Training for 2011-12



Teachers from the various centers that constitute CMLA met at Rameshwaram on May 14 and underwent training under the guidance of Swamiji and Mahadevi. Teachers conferred on class appropriate syllabus material for the session that begins in Sept. Slokas, art and craft projects, field trips and other points relevant to enhancing the kids experience at BV were all discussed.

CMLA CHYK Attend Camp at Piercy



Several members of CHYK CMLA along with other youth from the different centers of North America attended the "Be True to Your Nature" camp from April 22-25 at Krishnalaya, the Chinmaya ashram in Piercy. Youth enjoyed the lectures, discussions, hiking in the woods and by the river and bonded with each other making it a learning and fun experience.

CM Bakersfield Conducts Workshop

BY LOUIS MEDINA

BAKERSFIELD, CA - An insightful workshop titled "Personal Development" was provided to close to 70 hopeful seekers on April 30, in a joint effort between Bakersfield Memorial Hospital and Chinmaya Mission Bakersfield.

Pennetrating the four-hour mind-body health workshop at Memorial's Founder's Hall was the wisdom of Swami Ishwarananda, Head of the Chinmaya Mission in Southern California, and Kern County Mental Health Department Certified Drug and Alcohol Counselor and Certified Suicide Intervention Skills Trainer, Eric Moss.

CM Bakersfield President Dr. Anil Mehta, a local gastroenterologist, opened the conference by pointing out an important spiritual truth: The problems of the world (war, crime, pollution, waste) can only be alleviated as people begin to take control over their individual lives to effect positive change in society around them.

Moss followed with some practical metaphorical models to help workshop participants think about healthy goal setting. With the model of a ladder he asked participants to think about goal setting as manageable steps they can climb until they reach their personal objectives.

Swamiji's presentation was a thoughtful one, provoking insights for attendees who might be preoccupied with life's many problems. "We are not aware of how much time we are preoccupied," he said. "Those who are preoccupied cannot have personal development."

His advice was deep yet simple, drawing from the teachings of his



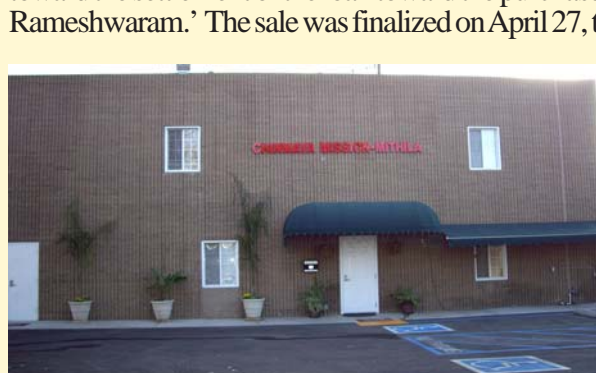
master and Chinmaya Mission Founder, the Late Swami Chinmayananda: The individual who has mastered himself can master the world.

Swamiji was quick to warn against the ego, which should always be in check. "We should not hesitate to seek help if we want to achieve personal development... But don't have ego about seeking help and don't show ego when offering help," he said. "True believers of God do everything with faith in the Lord and their work is in the spirit of gratitude."

A meditation session guided by Swamiji followed, and after that, a Q&A session where it became apparent that drug and alcohol abuse was a disruptive force in the lives of the family members of several in attendance. Swamiji, Mehta and Moss later mulled together over a possible collaboration for joint workshops in the future, including some aimed at youth.

'Mithila' Center Sold

The old 'Mithila' center of CMLA in Tustin has been sold. The buyers, also a religious group, paid \$1.2 million to acquire the property. Board members said they were pleased with the sale as it would go toward the settlement of the loan toward the purchase of 'Chinmaya Rameshwaram.' The sale was finalized on April 27, the birth date of S w a m i Ishwarananda!



For CMLA members it was a propitious happening on a day that already held significance for them!



Art by Sasha Anand. Art competition prize winner.

Pathways to Peace: Mistaken Identity

In the fourth chapter 'Mistaken Identity' of his book 'Pathways to Peace', Swami Ishwarananda makes the case for Vedanta, where one goes beyond dogma and ritual to cleanse the mind and live out the true, inspired life of this human birth.

When distilled down, what stands in the way of true peace, is the ego. And this is born from identification with the body, mind, intellect complex creating a 'mistaken identity' and feeding into the ego's need to be a 'somebody.' While most of us are content with this situation, anyone even asking, 'Am I the ego...?' says Swamiji, has taken a great leap forward on the quest for peace.

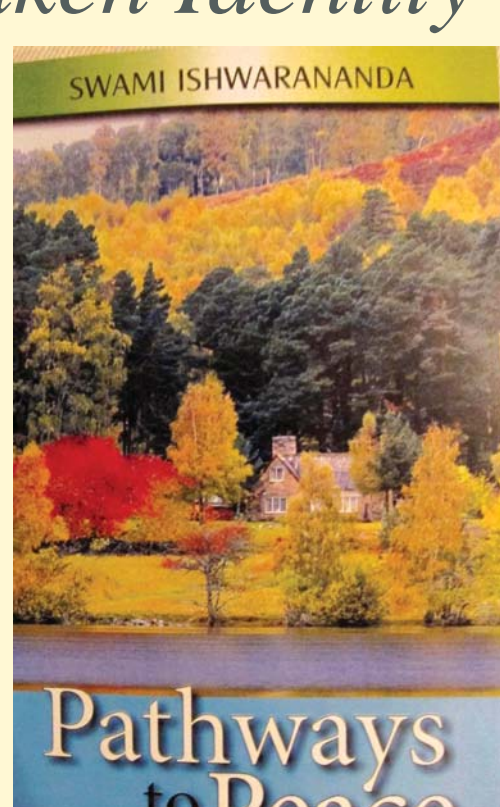
So where is this ego which stands between us and peace born? In our identification with thoughts, is the answer. It leads to us acting upon it, dealing with a reaction, creating impressions in the mind and which is what we unwittingly draw upon the next time, creating a habit. Habits in turn create a deeper impression or a formidable vasana. What thrives in the habit is the ego. What will make the ego weak, is ques-

tioning the thoughts that occur.

When we don't identify with the thoughts, vasanas will be stymied and unable to find expression. It's a situation akin to when we are in deep sleep, where we know no emotion, positive or negative. In short, no thought identification means there will be no expression, which in turn means there is no experience!

Swamiji urges all to become sadhaks - now. Here is what he says we can do if we want to know peace. 1. Don't wait for an opportunity like retirement, begin the quest now. 2. Sit quietly at least for a few minutes each day. 3. Witness the parade of thoughts marching by. 4. Disassociate from even the noblest of them. 4. As the thoughts go by, understand that you are not the thought, you are only *having* a thought. 5. Be prepared to become a 'nobody' from a 'somebody.'

For more: 'Pathways to Peace,' by Swami Ishwarananda, \$4, @ Chinmaya Rameshwaram bookstore. Next Month: Chapter 4, 'Mistaken Identity.'



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